

Ellenville, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today welcomed approximately 400 retired teachers to Ellenville, New York for the New York State Retired Teacher Association's annual convention. Hinchey spoke on the need to fight back against the ongoing assault against public employees, including teachers. He also discussed the need to protect programs on which many retired teachers rely, including Social Security and Medicare. Hinchey drew direct attention to his proposal to help control growing Medicare costs by requiring the negotiation of bulk-rate discounts on prescription drugs purchased through the Medicare Part D program.

"I believe that privatizing Medicare is exactly the wrong approach," Hinchey said to the retired teachers. "Instead, we need to focus on making Medicare more efficient. We need to allow Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices and improve access to less expensive generic drugs. Doing so would save more than \$150 billion over 10 years."

With debt reduction talks intensifying, Hinchey is leading a group of 78 U.S. House members who are calling for bulk-rate negotiation of prescription drug prices -- a plan that would save the federal government an estimated \$156 billion over 10 years and reduce drug costs for seniors by up to \$27 billion over the same time period.

The 2004 legislation, which created the Medicare Part D prescription drug program, explicitly prohibits the federal government from negotiating bulk rate discounts. The anti-negotiation provision was passed by a Republican House and Senate, and signed into law by President George W. Bush, over Hinchey's objections.